

Greenbank Mill
Southwest side of Greenbank Road at
Red Clay Creek
Marshallton Vicinity (Price's Corner, Mill
Creek Hundred)
New Castle County
Delaware

HABS No. DEL-164

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. DEL-164

GREENBANK MILL

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Location: Southwest side of Greenbank Road at Red Clay Creek; Marshallton Vicinity (Price's Corner, Mill Creek Hundred), New Castle County, Delaware.

Present Owner: Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc., 1301 Orange Street, Wilmington, Delaware.

Present Occupant: J. Roy Magargal, Inc.

Present Use: Grist mill; to be opened shortly as a grist mill museum.

Statement of Significance: A late 18th-century grist mill (with early 19th-century additions) which has housed several manufacturing concerns and even today is an active grist mill doing custom work. It is at present being converted to a grist mill museum.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners

- 1773 Empson Bird sold property to Robert Philips
- 1790 Robert Phillips builds gristmill near old "Swedes' Mill."
- 1798 Robert Phillips is assessed for a merchant mill.
- 1811 John R. Phillips, son of Robert Phillips, advertises for shepherd to care for flock of merino sheep.
- 1812 New stone wing (25 feet by 45 feet) is added to gristmill to house Madison Woolen Factory.
- 1815 John R. Phillips takes John M. Butler and Charles Briggs, fullers and finishers, into partnership in Madison Factory. [Delaware Gazette (Wilmington), March 14, 1815]
- 1816 Robert Phillips is assessed for a merchant mill, a sawmill, and a factory.
- 1817 Samuel Dixon withdraws from partnership with Joseph Sykes, Thomas Stead, Richard Kay, and John Brown, operating at Robert Phillips' Factory.
- 1818 Firm of Robert Phillips, Son, and Co. begins to operate the Madison Woolen Factory. [American Watchman (Wilmington), Aug. 26, 1818]
- 1819 Sheriff seizes property, merchant mill, sawmill and factory of Robert Phillips, but is unable to sell them.
- 1829 Robert Phillips dies. [Delaware Gazette (Wilmington), June 9, 1829].
- 1830 Mills are again exposed to sale by the sheriff and are purchased by John C. Phillips.

- 1851 William G. Phillips and Bro. establish bent ware factory at the Greenbank mills.
- 1852 John C. Phillips divides the mills between his two sons, Isaac D. Phillips and William G. Phillips.
- 1858 W. G. Phillips and Bro. bent ware factory makes wooden forks for farmers.
- 1874 W. G. Phillips and Bro. exhibit folding camp chairs, folding stools, step ladders, felloes and croquet mallets at Industrial Fair in Wilmington. [Every Evening (Wilmington), Oct. 26, 1874]
- 1876 William G. Phillips dies intestate. [Delaware Gazette (Wilmington), March 15, 1877]
- 1877 Benjamin Nields, trustee for estate of William G. Phillips, sells mills to Isaac D. Phillips. [Every Evening (Wilmington), May 9, 1879]
- 1879 Sheriff aeizea goods of John P. Wella and Co., successor in bent ware business to Wm. G. Phillips and Bro. John G. Phillipa, son of Isaac D. Phillips and partner of John P. Wella, is left to pay the claims. [Delaware Gazette (Wilmington), Jan. 30, 1879; Every Evening, Feb. 8, 1879]
- 1883 The Diamond Milling Co. is incorporated by the state of Delaware to operate the Greenbank Mills.
- 1888 Isaac D. Phillips sells mills to James and Ellis M. Clark.
- 1889 James Clark sella the mills to Ellis M. Clark.
- 1891 Ellis M. Clark transfers ownership of the mills to Joseph W. H. Wataon, trustee.
- 1891 Joseph W. H. Watson, trustee sells mills to Harman McDonald.
- 1901 Mary C. McDonald and William T. Iynam, executors of Harman McDonald, sell mills to John Lynn.

J. Roy Magargal, the preaent mill operator, has worked the mill for the past forty-five years under "six or more" different ownerships prior to Historic Red Clay Valley, Inc., which purchaaed the mill in 1964.

2. Date of erection: 1790, 1812.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure

Legend haa it that a "Swedea' Mill," built of logs and uaed for grinding flour, was erected on the property sometime after 1677. Machinery developed by the famous Oliver Evans was installed near the beginning of the 19th century. Evans had revolutionized the milling industry of Delaware and was to influence the mechanization of the milling industry of the United States.

Puraell states that during the Merino Mania a "flock of merino sheep was in existence at least by the second month of 1811. It was probably at about the aame time that Phillips tore down the old 'Swedes' mill which stood next to his merchant mill, and built on its site a structure to house the new operation. Named the Madison Factory after Jamea Madison, the President of the United Statea and a lifelong advocate of American manufactures, the new structure made

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a handsome appearance."

A notice of "For Sale, or Rent" in the American Watchman, January 11, 1822 describes the property:

"About 7 acres of land on both sides of Red Clay creek, about 4 1/2 miles from Wilmington, and 2 from Newport, New Castle county, whereon is erected a large mill house, 50 feet long and 39 wide, 3 stories high, with an addition on one side of 45 feet long and 25 wide, 3 stories high, and at one end an addition of 28 feet long and 24 wide, one and a half story high, with 2 large sheds, and a shear shop. There are 2 water wheels, and water sufficient to drive them at all times (or nearly so) to run five feet stones powerfully. There is likewise a saw mill, and sufficient water (exclusive of what is necessary for the grist mills) to drive it eight or nine months in the year. One water wheel in the mill is now employed in woolen establishment, which is carried on pretty extensively; the other wheel in the milling business. There is house room (by evacuating the grist mill machinery, etc.) sufficient for two thousand cotton spindles, with all the machinery necessary for them, besides the woolen establishment, and water sufficient for both establishments. There is a large, tight dam, a short head and tall race, with twelve feet head and fall, a large stone mansion house and kitchen, 2 stories high, cellared under the whole, a good frame barn, with stabling under it, and six tenements for families to live in. It is a healthy neighborhood and handsomely situated. More land can be had convenient."

At mid-century a new enterprise of manufacturing wooden spokes, felloes, and general bentware was undertaken. The company returned to grist milling as the major activity of the mill after 1879 and the newly completed Wilmington and Western Railroad serviced the mill after 1872. The mill continues to stone grind custom work even today.

C. Sources of Information

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Prepared by William B. Bassett
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
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With the co-operation of Robert L. Raley, AIA

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: A substantial early mill structure of timber frame with clapboarding and fieldstone masonry with interesting structural and gristmill machinery details.
2. Condition of fabric: In a fair state of preservation considering that it has been in continuous use for 170 years.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: Gristmill 50' x 39'; factory addition 45' x 25', both two-and-a-half stories plus basement.
2. Foundations: Stone rubble and mortar.
3. Wall construction: Gristmill has a timber frame with wooden clapboarding; factory addition is of 18" thick local stone and mortar.
4. Porches: Small porch at northeast entry with cantilevered shed roof.
5. Chimneys: Brick chimney on office addition (former chimney now gone on southwest end of factory addition).
6. Openings:
 - a. Doors: Wooden Dutch doors and wooden sliding shed door.
 - b. Windows: Six-over-six-light, double-hung wooden sash.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roofs with wooden shingles, new shingle roof on factory addition; shed roof with wooden shingles over northwest loading area.
- b. Cornice: Wooden box cornice.
- c. Dormers: One frame dormer with clapboarding on each side of factory addition. Each has six-over-six light, double-hung wooden sash.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans:

a. Gristmill

- (1) Basement: 50'x39' rectangle, four bays long by three bays wide, 12"x12" wooden post 12' on center support 12"x13" beams on wooden bolsters which support 3"x9" joists @18" on center.
- (2) First floor: 50'x39' rectangle, four bays long by three bays wide with entries on northwest (loading) and northeast. A small office addition on north corner by northeast entry, 11x11 wooden posts 12' on center support 11x14 beams which support 3"x10" floor joists @20" on center.
- (3) Second floor: 50'x39' rectangle, four bays long by three bays wide with room over office addition. 8"x8" wooden posts support 11"x15" beams which support wooden floor joists (not measured) but approximately 3"x10" @20" on center.
- (4) Loft: 50'x39' rectangle, four bays long by three bays wide. Wooden roof rafters 6"x9" @68" on center with 5"x8" tie beams, and 6"x8" king post support 3"x4" purlins @25" on center.

b. Factory addition

- (1) Basement: 45' long by 25' wide rectangle separated from gristmill by the approximately 12' wide wheel pit and machinery area.
- (2) First floor: 45' long by 25' wide rectangle,

two bays wide by three bays long with entry door on southwest and interior stairway on northwest corner.

- (3) Second floor: Same as above with one exterior loading door on southwest and southeast.
- (4) Loft: Same as above with small exterior loading door on southwest only.

2. Stairways:

- a. Gristmill: Wooden free-standing stairways in second bay (basement to loft).
- b. Factory addition: Corner winding wooden staircase (first to loft).

3. Flooring: 10" yellow pine board flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Exposed construction.

5. Hardware: Much of the 19th-century machinery in various states of repair still in place including two later grinding stones (originals reportedly moved to Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware). Numerous conveyers and grain-handling equipment.

6. Lighting: Electric (extra lighting recently added for public museum).

7. Heating: Office heater; fireplace in basement of factory addition used for metalwork as well as heating (chimney later removed).

D. Site

- 1. General setting and orientation: On the west bank of Red Clay Creek with a millrace leading to the mill from the north and joining the creek south of the mill. There are railway tracks on the east side of the creek (Baltimore & Ohio-Landenburg Branch). The New Castle County Correctional Institute is also adjacent to the east. The Grist Mill stands lengthwise northwest to southeast; factory addition northeast to southwest.
- 2. Outbuildings: A substantial miller's house, now separately owned, is situated to the north across Greenbank Road.

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